



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Republican Leader
Committee on Education and Labor Hearing:
“Examining Threats to Workers with Preexisting Conditions”
February 6, 2019

“Americans with pre-existing conditions need health insurance. This is a fact, and a value that Congress and the President have affirmed countless times. It’s also the law. Insurance companies are prohibited from denying or not renewing health coverage due to a pre-existing condition. Insurance companies are banned from rescinding coverage based on a pre-existing condition. Insurance companies are banned from excluding benefits based on a pre-existing condition. Insurance companies are prevented from raising premiums on individuals with pre-existing conditions who maintain continuous coverage.

So it’s perplexing why Committee Democrats are even holding this hearing, and by doing so they are trying to make it about threats. Instead, this hearing should focus on how the strong economy with its extraordinary job growth is increasing the number of workers with employer-sponsored health coverage.

This committee’s work on employer-based health care options dates back to when the costs of health care began to rise several decades ago. The status quo was not sustainable then, and in 2010 the tide took a radical turn for the worse with the *Affordable Care Act*, which decimated options for employers earnestly seeking to provide competitive benefits packages to recruit and retain workers and sent individual premium costs on an even faster upward trajectory.

Workers paid the price. Employers paid the price.

But, after eight years of Republican leadership in the House of Representatives, and the election of President Trump, the U.S. economy and job markets are thriving. With consistent wage growth and greater availability of highly-

competitive jobs, smart employers are continuing to ensure that they offer competitive benefits packages – including sponsored health care plans – to recruit and retain workers.

And their efforts are working. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, 152 million Americans—including many who have pre-existing conditions—are insured through plans offered by their employer. That’s the majority of the American workforce, and more than the individual market, Medicare, or Medicaid.

Since 2013, 7 million more Americans have gained employer-sponsored health care coverage, with 2.6 million gaining coverage since President Trump took office. The plans employers offer are, on average, higher quality and provide better value than what can be found on the individual market. In 2017, the average premium for individual and family employer-sponsored coverage increased by a modest 3 and 5 percent, respectively. In contrast, the average Exchange premium – Obamacare – went up by roughly 30 percent.

So, if we are going to have this hearing at all, we welcome it as an opportunity to talk once more about the importance of making sure American workers have more options, more flexibility, and more freedom.

Last Congress, the Republican-led House of Representatives passed the *American Health Care Act*. The legislation would restore stability to the health care marketplace and deliver lower costs to consumers. Ensuring protections for individuals with pre-existing conditions was a central piece of the bill with Section 137 of the legislation stating: ‘Nothing in this Act shall be construed as permitting health insurance issuers to limit access to health coverage for individuals with preexisting conditions.’

So, people may have an opinion, but they cannot argue with the facts, and the facts are written in this legislation. Section 137.

Republicans on this committee also led the passage of the *Small Business Health Fairness Act*. That legislation would empower small businesses to band together through association health plans (AHPs) to negotiate for lower health insurance

costs on behalf of their employees, and last summer, the Department of Labor finalized a rule expanding access to AHPs.

During the 115th Congress, House Republicans also passed the *Competitive Health Insurance Reform Act* and the committee-led *Self-Insurance Protection Act*. What all of these bills have in common is their goal to expand coverage, lower health care costs for all Americans, and again, give freedom to Americans.

Committee Republicans welcome this opportunity once again to assure Americans with pre-existing conditions that their coverage is protected. House Republicans will continue to champion legislative solutions to combat some of the most pressing problems facing our health care system, including skyrocketing costs, the high prices of certain drugs, the industry's lack of cost transparency, and the looming threat of a single-payer system. These are the factors that pose the real threat to Americans having options that work for them."

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